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SLOWLY BUT SURELY: LEADING THE WORKFORCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE INTO THE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract

In 2015, a broadly representative committee from across the University of Adelaide considered the next 20 years of the University's Library: how to respond to changes in the academic and information management landscape while preserving and enhancing what is valued in the Library today.

The Library of the Future Committee, as it was called, found that library services were struggling to be all things to all people; students, staff, alumni and the wider community. As in many academic libraries there was a large legacy print collection that was little used, and that use was continuing to decline; correspondingly the staff structure and skills base was still aligned with managing a print information world. Library buildings had not been updated for many years, were generally run-down and not best designed to provide the kind of spaces and facilities expected in a contemporary research-intensive university library.

In 2016 the review committee published their findings in a report entitled *Library of the Future: recommendations for a bold and agile University library*. The recommendations made were grouped together under four themes: Library Services, Library Collections, Library Organisation and Library Facilities and Systems.

This paper will focus on a selection of major change initiatives that have taken place in response to the report's recommendations. Various internal drivers required that changes were made incrementally and staying true to the overall vision of the Library of the Future report while maintaining enthusiasm, trust and commitment from Library staff and the University community presented a number of challenges. The iterative nature of the process, however, has allowed Library leaders to build capability and confidence among staff and to, slowly but surely, shift cultural norms and expectations to reposition the Library in the wider University context.

Keywords: Academic Libraries; Organisational Change; Organisational Culture; Professional Development; Strategic Planning

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Teresa was appointed to the position of University Librarian at the University of Adelaide in 2016 with responsibility for leading and managing staff and resources in the development and implementation of the University of Adelaide's *Library of the Future* plan which sets out a roadmap for "bold and agile" library services that support the University's research, teaching and student success.

Introduction

Adelaide is the capital of the State of South Australia which has a population of approximately 1.3m, 75% of whom live in the greater Adelaide region. Adelaide was founded in 1836 as the planned capital for a freely-settled British province in Australia. It is one of only a few Australian settlements without a convict history. The indigenous Kaurna people were extensively displaced by European settlement but are now recognised as the traditional owners of the land.

Today Adelaide is noted for its many and varied arts festivals, sporting events, extensive safe, sandy beaches and for food and wine, with nearby wine regions of the Barossa Valley, Clare Valley and McLaren Vale. Industry has been dominated by defence and manufacturing, although the latter has been in decline since the cessation of car production in the state.

Adelaide ranks highly in quality of life surveys, consistently appearing at the top of lists of the world's most livable cities.

The University of Adelaide was established in November 1874. It is the third oldest university in Australia, after Sydney and Melbourne; with those universities, it is a member of the prestigious Group of 8 research intensive universities in Australia, albeit considerably smaller with just over 20,000 FTE students across its five faculties. The University ranks in the top 150 worldwide in all the various measures of research quality and performance.

The Library currently operates from five separate locations: there are three libraries on the main North Terrace campus in the city centre – the iconic Barr Smith Library being the largest, but also a Law Library and Music Library. There are also libraries at the University's two other campuses of Waite, about 8kms from the city centre, where the schools of Agriculture and Wine Science are based, and Roseworthy about 50kms north of Adelaide, the centre for Veterinary Science teaching and research.

There are just over 100 library staff, approximately 85 full time equivalents (FTE).

Background

In late 2014 the University of Adelaide commissioned The Library of the Future (LOTF) project. Throughout 2015 the LOTF Committee, which included representatives from faculties, graduate and undergraduate students, administration and members of the Libraries' senior management team, considered the future of the University of Adelaide Libraries. The committee reflected on how to adapt and improve the Libraries' value to the University in the changing context of academic libraries worldwide to create "the best Libraries for the future of the University of Adelaide". The LOTF Committee undertook widespread consultation and received extensive input from faculty, students, alumni and community members. The outcome was a comprehensive report, *Library of the Future: recommendations for a bold and agile future library* [University of Adelaide 2016]. The vision articulated in this report is for the "University of Adelaide Libraries to become a bold, agile and essential contributor to the learning, teaching and research aspirations of the University". To achieve this vision a series of recommendations were compiled and grouped around four central themes:

- Library Services
- Library Collections
- Library Organisation
- Library Facilities and Systems.

Overall, the LOTF Committee found that library services were struggling to be all things to all people: students, staff, alumni and the wider community. In the collections area there was a large legacy print collection that was little used, and that use was continuing to decline; correspondingly the staff structure was still aligned with managing a print information world. Library spaces had not been updated for many years, were looking generally a bit shabby and not best designed to provide the kind of spaces and facilities expected in a contemporary research-intensive university library.

Transformational change

The Library of the Future report noted that transformational leadership would be needed to refine and implement the report's recommendations. "Future leadership will need to make significant changes to address demands and opportunities" [University of Adelaide 2016].

The long-serving University Librarian had retired soon after the LOTF Committee was established and the position was not filled pending the findings of the review. In its final report, the Committee recommended the appointment of a dedicated University Librarian at a senior leadership level within the University, to further develop and implement the LOTF plan. The Committee also noted that the Library workforce would need "significant restructure" and that processes and service delivery required review; highlighting issues with a large leadership team, lack of centralisation, duplicated, inefficient workflows and the development of remote, siloed teams [University of Adelaide 2016].

After the appointment of the University Librarian in November 2016 it was very clear that the restructure was a priority, not just because it was necessary to address the issues highlighted in the report but also because an impending restructure, with no detail of what this might look like, had been hovering over the staff for close to two years, with a correspondingly detrimental effect on staff morale and engagement.

To inform the design of the structure a set of ten principles was developed, derived from the broader recommendations and findings of the LOTF report:

1. Centralise functions while maintaining branch presence and developing discipline expertise.
2. Increase resourcing and expertise in the management of electronic collections.
3. Establish consistent, discipline-focused liaison, research, teaching and learning services.
4. Make more use of systems functionality and leverage vendor partnerships.
5. Change the front-of-house service model.
6. Emphasise analysis and assessment of return on investment in collection management practice.
7. Increase Special Collections' involvement in research teaching and learning.
8. Establish learning environments that complement those already available in the Student Hub.
9. Develop succession plans and career path opportunities for staff.
10. Increase capability and flexibility of staff to work across a range of tasks in response to fluctuating workloads and user demand.

A new structure was designed around two portfolios each led by an Associate University Librarian (AUL) reporting to the University Librarian: Library Experience and Academic Engagement.

The Library Experience portfolio brings together services and activities with an "outside-in" perspective, focused on developing and providing services related to the way people experience and interact with the Library, its services, spaces and collections. Physically, by coming into one of the libraries to use the collections, ask for help, study quietly on their own or as a group, or remotely, by accessing online collections or information and services provided on the web. Two managers report to the AUL – a Digital Library Manager responsible for Digitisation, Discovery and Systems, and a Client Services Manager responsible for all front-of-house services, user experience, marketing, communications (including the Library website and social media presence) library spaces and physical collections.

The Academic Engagement portfolio is focused externally, on engagement with the academic community through its discipline-based outreach and liaison services to students and academic staff and by developing and managing services and collections to support research, teaching and learning. In addition, University Archives, Record Keeping and Special Collections engage with the wider University and community to preserve and facilitate access to the University's

records, rare and unique collection resources. A management team of six reports to the Associate University Librarian.

The two portfolios are interdependent, and both include elements of front and back of house activities. Strategic direction and operational priorities are set by the Library Executive, comprising the University Librarian and two AULs, with input from the wider Library Leadership Team which includes the Managers as members.

A different route

The first few months of 2017 were spent on designing the structure, writing position descriptions, talking to Human Resources and the Union to ensure everything was being done according to policy and procedure and by mid-March everything was in place to launch, what is known as a Major Organisational Change (MOC) process, which would take about three months. Just as details and timeframes for this process were about to be communicated to staff, the University's Finance Department completed a reforecasting of the budget, including a risk assessment of the impact of redundancy payments. The risk was deemed to be too high at the time and the Library was advised not to proceed with the restructure.

An organisational restructure would have addressed a range of deficiencies and anomalies that had evolved in the existing structure over the last few years. In one, admittedly significant, change process the staff profile would have been repositioned, in line with the principles above; new positions and new reporting lines would have been established and the Library would be well-positioned to start addressing the recommendations of the LOTF report.

One swiftly enacted change process would have also, finally, provided some certainty for staff who had been waiting and wondering about what would be happening to their roles, their teams and the wider Library for quite some time. The announcement that a major change process would not be happening was greeted with a certain amount of confusion and anxiety by staff that did little to foster a climate of trust and confidence in overall leadership.

Meanwhile other change initiatives were already underway in the Library. Workflows, service models, systems, policies and procedures were all being reviewed and revised and long-overdue refurbishments were being planned. Without corresponding changes to roles and responsibilities it would not be possible to fully effect these wider changes, but more importantly, investment in and attention to staff well-being and satisfaction was essential to maintaining the overall change momentum. Again in consultation with HR and the Union, a number of actions were identified that would not trigger redundancies, but would create flexibility, increase capabilities and improve development opportunities for staff, which in turn, would, hopefully, start to rebuild engagement.

Staff retirements had provided the opportunity to establish and appoint to the new Associate University Librarian positions and existing teams were realigned, as much as was possible, within the two new portfolio areas. Some individual positions within teams were also realigned, for example the Metadata Librarians were moved from the Collections Team, within Academic Engagement, into the Discovery Team in the Library Experience portfolio. This provided a framework within which to undertake a bigger piece of work looking at individual roles and reviewing and revising position descriptions.

Re-positioning

Many of the staff did not have a current position description (PD) and the style and format of those that did was not consistent. This review provided the opportunity to talk to staff about their roles, identifying what they were actually doing on a day-to-day basis and the skills and expertise required to perform the roles. It also reinforced a sense of individual responsibility and belonging within the wider Library structure.

The format for the position descriptions was standardised, with an emphasis on soft skills in recognition that all roles have elements of autonomy, customer focus and responsibility for

service provision, requiring effective teamwork. Familiarity with information systems and digital literacy skills and customer engagement are also essential in a library environment where customers primarily interact with the library's virtual spaces rather than physical sites.

Groups of staff with similar roles were identified and brought together under a single generic PD – namely the Library Officers, Metadata Librarians and the Liaison Librarians. Within each of these groups there was variation in position level, and consequently remuneration, even though essentially everyone was doing the same kind of work.

The first group to be moved to a generic PD was the Library Officers as the largest group with a range of roles where the changing nature of service delivery and collection resources had made a significant impact. Staff in these roles were classified as either Higher Education Officer (HEO) level 2 or 3 and many of the staff at level 2 had reached the top of the salary scale some time ago. The LOTF report had extensively documented the changes to academic library services and functions and noted that the existing Library workforce structure did not match current needs where diminishing numbers of hardcopy resources are borrowed, with a corresponding reduced requirement for HEO 2 staff to undertake the management and movement of these items [University of Adelaide 2016]. Instead, HEO 2 staff had been increasingly involved in substantive customer service support roles across a diverse range of library functions. The new PD recognised this and was written in such a way that while each Library Officer would have a "home team", the expectation would be that they could work across the Library and be redeployed according to workload fluctuations, staff shortages or projects.

The resulting PD was reviewed and classified as an HEO 3 position, which meant that there was no change to salary for those who were already in an HEO 3 role, but all HEO 2 roles were transferred to the mid step of the HEO 3 salary scale. Overall this had minimal, immediate impact on the budget but it did provide a positive boost to those staff by formally recognising the changing nature of their roles and providing them with the prospect of automatic annual pay increases for the next three years. Importantly, the new position description comprehensively provided increased opportunities for greater breadth of skills development and growth.

A similar process was followed with the Metadata Librarians who were variously at level 5 or level 6. With regard to this group the LOTF report noted the emphasis in research-intensive academic libraries such as the University of Adelaide, on the acquisition and management of electronic collection resources [University of Adelaide 2016]. This change in format has resulted in a corresponding change in the nature of metadata creation, with more vendor supplied records and less original cataloguing work required for traditional print formats. Instead a more complex range of metadata creation is required, across a range of schema for multiple systems, to facilitate discovery of and access to electronic resources. The metadata positions in the Library had become less differentiated and the distinction between the HEO 5 and 6 roles had blurred. A generic PD recognised the need for broad, consistent expertise among all the metadata staff. The resulting PD for this group was classified as a broadband 5/6 role which meant there was no immediate change for any of the incumbent staff but for the HEO 5s the opportunity to seamlessly transition to the HEO 6 salary scale when they reach the top of the HEO 5 salary scale.

The third group of staff who went through this process was the liaison team. The Librarians in this team were classified as HEO 7 or 8 due to historic anomalies associated with some very long-serving staff in these roles. The generic PD for the liaison team was informed by a new model for academic liaison that was being established to enable the Library to deliver scalable, consistent services that equitably support the learning, teaching and research activities of the University. Contrary to the outcome of classification review for the other two generic PDs, the resulting position description for the Liaison Librarians was classified at the lower of the two existing levels, as an HEO 7. Those staff that were currently on the HEO 8 salary scale were given 12 months' salary maintenance as a transition arrangement.

The use of generic PDs provides greater equity and intrinsic pathways for staff to gain new skills and opportunities for development, particularly so for the HEO 3 Library Officers who now perform a much broader range of tasks which positions them well to pursue higher level positions as they are available.

While this work acknowledged changes that had gradually taken effect in existing roles, in order to fulfil the vision of the LOTF report, new roles with a new focus and new skills were required. Positions in the areas of user experience, learning and teaching innovation, digitisation, research data management, collection analysis and discovery were created and advertised internally with the consequentially vacated positions being disestablished, merged or realigned in some way. As individuals retired or resigned their positions were also reviewed and redesigned. As a result, the new organisational structure started to take shape and there was a definite shift evident in the staff profile.

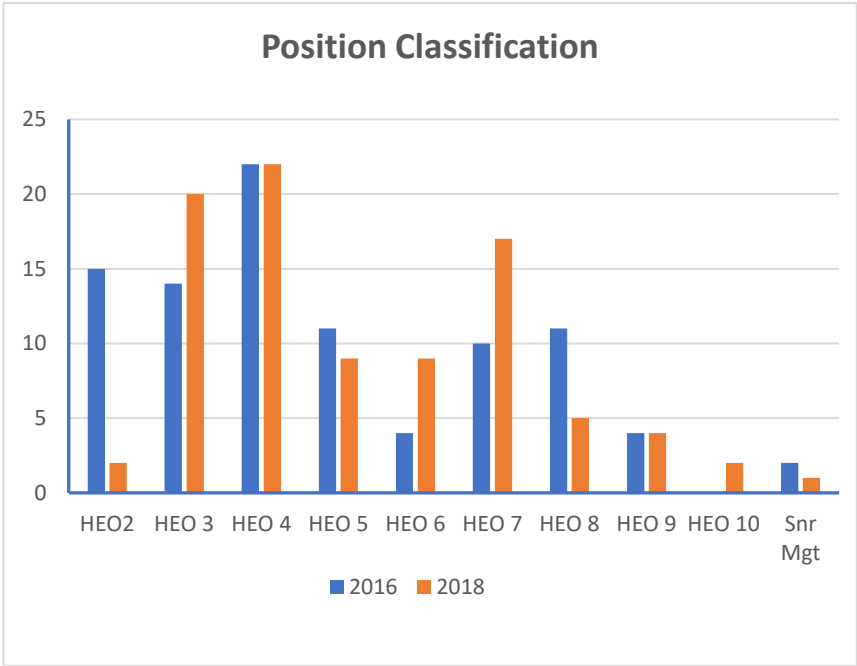


Table 1. Position Classification

One Library

As already mentioned, the LOTF report had highlighted an issue with lack of centralisation that resulted in duplicated, inefficient workflows and a siloed culture. The four branch libraries (Law, Music, Waite and Roseworthy), each had their own dedicated manager and staff, with little or no movement across locations, even though the Law and Music libraries are on the same campus as the larger Barr Smith Library, and within a five-minute walk. There were two collection teams, one for print and one for electronic and although an e-preferred policy was in place, giving priority to the ordering and acquisition of electronic resources, many of the tasks associated with collection development were duplicated.

At a University level the Library’s formal department name was actually “University Libraries” and this term is used throughout the LOTF report. Changing the name to “University Library” as an early step sent a very visible message within the Library and across the wider University about the direction of change. The website, all signage, publicity material, documentation, business cards and such like were changed to the singular “University Library”. The concept of One Library was embedded in the work that was done on redesigning PDs and realigning teams within the new portfolios. It was also central to the design of the new front-of-house service model “Ask Library”. Initially piloted as a pop-up service at the Barr Smith Library and gradually rolled out at all library locations, staff wearing bright red t-shirts provide a proactive and energised, at-elbow support service that is managed centrally by the Ask Library Coordinator. In addition to the core team of Ask Library staff, all staff, up to level 6, are trained to undertake shifts on Ask Library at any of the five library locations.

Another way of encouraging a One Library culture is to make physical changes. At the time of the LOTF review there were seven separate team-based workrooms in the Barr Smith Library.

Most of the staff have now been co-located into a single open plan workroom. This was something that was approached gradually. The intention was signalled when the staff were realigned into their new portfolios, but the actual relocation was done a few months later, team-by-team, allowing each to settle into the new location before moving another team. The full relocation has only recently been completed and there are issues to address around different responses to levels of noise, lighting, heating and so forth. It helps however that the workroom itself is light, bright and spacious with a lovely outlook; it is prime real estate and would ordinarily be given over to student space except that accessibility issues caused by the building's heritage status prevent this. The workroom is also next door to the administration area where the Library Executive team is based, which improves visibility of the University Librarian and AULs and facilitates serendipitous interactions with staff. The wider benefits of staff being able to have quick catch-ups with each other and get to know more about each other and what is happening in their day-to-day work are gradually being realised and acknowledged.

Challenge and Change

Although the LOTF report did include a piece on values and culture it was addressed in general terms only, observing that engagement and commitment by staff members toward common values and in pursuit of a common vision would make the future Library stronger [University of Adelaide 2016]. Changing positions, procedures and locations can be a relatively straightforward transactional process. Such changes do not necessarily bring about cultural change in and of themselves. Cultural change is a more nebulous process; it can take a long time and progress is not easily measured.

Challenge and Change grew out of a University-wide project led by the Library to develop a Digital Capabilities Framework for the University. It was initially intended as a development exercise for Library staff to improve their own capabilities in the use of digital tools and software in day-to-day work practice. It also presented an opportunity for whole of library involvement and engagement with the general change environment and ultimately delivered an unexpected and welcome indicator of a positive shift in organisational culture.

This was the initial communication that was sent to staff:

"The Library is going through some changes, building works are happening, teams have changed, workflows are being reviewed and a big group of us are about to start Ask Library shifts! This is a good time for us all to have a look around the Library, to have a look at our own work, and think "I have a good idea!" So, exercise your strategic muscles and come up with an idea of some improvement to enhance the Library's value to its customers. The idea can be big or small, can involve either your own work or another area of the Library – it could be about promotion, workflows, building layout, services, etc.

Think about ways to "Improve Library space, equipment, services and resources to enhance the user experience and support learning and teaching and research objectives".

To think strategically, remember "You don't need a new title, more control, or bigger budgets to be more strategic; you just need to be more deliberate in your thoughts and actions. By investing time and energy to reflect on the situations and decisions that face you; by finding ways to connect ideas and people that you had never linked before; and by having the courage to make choices about what you will do and what you won't, you will greatly increase your strategic contribution." [Davey 2014]

Staff were required to produce a one-page report or equivalent and encouraged to fill it with plenty of images to describe and sell their idea. More importantly, they were also required to complete a reflection piece to demonstrate their thinking and describe what they learned from this exercise.

The exercise was aimed at all staff, "one-in all-in" was the catch cry and there was 100% participation. With ideas ranging from proposals for new services, improving workflows and even re-arranging furniture presented in infographics, mindmaps, PowerPoint, Prezi and even a few videos. All the proposals and the associated reflections were read by the University

Librarian and then reviewed by the Library Leadership Team, who assessed the proposals for next steps in one of the following ways:

- Just Do It!
- Work with someone else who had the same or similar idea
- Contribute the idea to an existing project
- Scope a new project.

These responses were communicated individually to everyone with a personalised commentary on their proposal and reflection from the AUL who coordinated the overall exercise. This was a lot of work and very time consuming, but the benefits have been enormous. Staff were given the opportunity to develop their digital capabilities, exercise their strategic muscles and undertake some personal reflection about the process. At both an operational and strategic level there were some great ideas that came out of it and although it is not easy to quantify the cultural benefit, the high participation rate, the sharing of honest, personal reflections and the overall positive vibe associated with the exercise indicate a significant shift in attitude and a gratifying degree of trust.

Next stop on the way to the future

In the various changes that have taken place at the University of Adelaide Library in the last 18 months, ongoing, honest and open communication has been essential; staying true to the objectives of the LOTF report and the guiding principles that came out of it has required difficult conversations to adjust expectations, call out bad behavior and challenge negative, destructive cultural norms. None of that is easy, but by providing positive opportunities for personal and professional growth, physically, operationally, organisationally and culturally, the Library is unrecognisable from what it was when the LOTF report was commissioned four years ago.

The future of course is an ever-moving destination and with a new Vice-Chancellor in place and a new strategic plan for the University expected later this year it is timely to revisit the LOTF report. Many of the action-focused recommendations made in the report can now be ticked off, the principle-based recommendations have been embedded into services, spaces, positions and organisational culture. Some recommendations need reviewing for continued relevance and prioritisation and there are aspects of information management that were not initially addressed by the report, such as digital preservation and open access publishing. Later this year, work will begin on a new strategic plan for the Library that will inform priorities and operational activities for the next 3-5 years. Development of this plan will be a library-wide exercise, involving all staff in a series of workshops and building on the high-level of engagement and commitment that was evident in the Challenge and Change process to articulate a common vision that goes beyond the Library of the Future to create One Library for the future.

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